

Drama Questioning: Roles That Promote Questioning

Note: Example questions are based on reading *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989).

SIMPLE QUESTIONING ROLES

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE QUESTION
Policeman	Looking for the facts. Asks Right There/“on the lines” questions	What was the first question the soldier asked when he stopped Annemarie from running?
Absentee/ Stranger in Role	Naive questioner is filling in gaps, wants to get the backstory and get in the game.	Why did the Germans invade Denmark? What are they doing to control the population? What are the Danish people doing to resist?
Researcher	This questioner wants to see specific patterns, implications, and applications related to the inquiry.	Why were the Danes so successful at resisting the Nazis and at helping the Jewish population to escape? What can we learn from them, and how can we use it?
The Interviewer	This questioner is building a picture of the one being interviewed. Trying to get at the human implications and backstory. Might treat ideas or objects as human with a story to tell.	Mrs. Johansen, why did you not tell your younger girls about how Lise died? Under what conditions do you think it is all right to withhold the truth from your children? When must you tell them the truth?
The Detective	This questioner is looking for clues; questions are sometimes indirect and divergent. Wants to infer what is not stated. Is trying to figure out what is hidden and to connect the visible dots to what is invisible.	Peter, how were you able to get such wonderful gifts of food for the Johansens? How did you keep from being discovered by the Nazis? How did you keep from being betrayed? Tell me about your “cover.” Why were you willing to take such risks?
Devil’s Advocate	This questioner is challenging the prevailing argument and perspectives, statements of others, or the text by taking the opposite or a divergent point of view, asking: What if it were otherwise? What voices are silenced?	What might the German soldiers on Annemarie’s street corner say to us if they were allowed to speak? How might they feel about being in Denmark and about their country’s policies? Let’s imagine that they sympathize with the Danes; why don’t they try to help? What does that help us learn about civil rights?

ADVANCED ROLES AND LENSES FOR GOING DEEPER

Movie Director	The director’s lens is one of working with the actors or agents of a performance and getting them to effectively reveal the character or identity they play. Directors work to bring out the elements of the characters. They orchestrate and position. They help us to “see” and “experience.”	Mama, what are your biggest worries for your children during the Nazi occupation? How can you show us that, beyond what you say, when the children tell you that they have been questioned by the soldiers? What gestures or expressions would reveal this?
Set Designer: Visualizes setting and the influence of context on characters and actions	The designer’s lens is one of visualizing the setting or action in a scene. Designers are concerned with colors, shapes, symbols, repetitions, moods, and tones and how they all add up to an atmosphere and an ambience that have a direct influence on characters, action, meaning, and effect.	What should the Johansens’ apartment look like? What is the furniture like? How do things change when the family enters the apartment from the outside world, and how can we show this? What does this reveal about the need for a safe space? How does the apartment change when the soldiers barge in to question them?

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<p>The Psychologist: Infers character and explores a reader's response</p>	<p>The psychologist's lens is one of understanding the feelings, sensitivities, and sensibilities of a character (or reader), including the flaws and weaknesses. Psychologists try to help the character, author, reader, or text see its way to improvement, resolution, or evolution. They are concerned with the motivations and deep meanings and emotional charges.</p>	<p>Annemarie, what was your greatest fear during the story, and what did you do to overcome it? What is your biggest challenge now that the war is over? What have you learned from your experience, and how will you try to use it? What advice would you give to your younger self before the war? What advice would you give to us for navigating our biggest problems?</p>
<p>The Philosopher: Gets after deep meanings and themes and generalizations to apply to life</p>	<p>The philosopher's lens is one of deeper contemplation, looking into the deep meanings and the inner workings of all things. The philosopher's job is to wonder at the purpose or rules or laws by which something exists. And philosophers help us understand ourselves through our experience of living through the text.</p>	<p>Can we ever live in a world without war? What would have to happen to accomplish this? What if everyone stood up for the oppressed, as the Danes did in all wearing the yellow stars? What would that look like today? Who would we protect, and how would we do it? Would we be willing to do it? Why or why not?</p>
<p>The Mechanic: Looks to see how a text or data is structured for meaning and effect and structural generalizations</p>	<p>The mechanic's lens is one of looking analytically at the way something works, how it is built, how it is structured for meaning and effect, if it works efficiently, how it might be improved or fixed, or how it might be changed for different meanings and effects. The mechanic looks at how various parts work one to another, building meaning by building or playing off each other. Technical skill, the act of making and maintaining, is a priority to a mechanic.</p>	<p>Why does the story start with the girls running home from school and then being stopped by soldiers? How would the story be different if Lise had not died, or if Peter had not died? How would the story and its meaning be different if an adult had led the Rosens to the fishing boat instead of Annemarie? At the end, why is Annemarie so keen to fix Ellen's necklace, and how does this create meaning and effect?</p>
<p>The Coach: Provides procedural feedback to the author, a character, or the reader, particularly about strategies and structures and ways forward</p>	<p>The coach's lens is one of pushing skill and performance to its best level. The coach is concerned with risk-taking, challenge, self-improvement, and technical superiority, as well as motivating the progression forward to further work.</p>	<p>Lois Lowry, the way you end the book with Papa fixing Ellen's necklace gives us a sense of hope that the Jewish people will soon be reconnected to their homeland and friends. Why did you end the book on such a hopeful note? What do you hope for the lives of Ellen and Annemarie beyond the end of the book? If you were to write a sequel, what would it be about?</p> <p>What do you hope readers learn that they might apply to their own lives?</p>
<p>The Historian: Beyond the lines—looks at context and applications</p>	<p>The historian's lens is one of seeing the bigger picture that surrounds an individual event or work. It sees the root causes and outcomes of a work, its place in a continuum, its role in a trend, its role as part of a victory of certain ideas or forces, defeat, discovery, etc. It sees the work as a spot along a continual evolution forward.</p>	<p>Why has Germany been at the center of European conflict over the last two centuries?</p> <p>What provokes conflict between countries? What encourages a group of people to overcome, to resist oppression, to hang together in the face of great danger, and to persist? What other examples do we see of this from history?</p>
<p>Spiritual Guide: Authorial generalizations, reader response</p>	<p>The spiritual guide's lens is one of spiritual or personal meaning in the world. It is concerned with the deeper, personal truths and the higher place of a work, looking at how the text may reveal the beliefs, assumptions, and expectations for creating and serve as a holy artifact or relic, talisman, or guide.</p>	<p>What is our relationship and responsibility to others who are in trouble, or may be suffering? What would Lois Lowry or the characters say about this? To what degree do we agree with them? What challenges are there to living out their vision in our own lives?</p>

Source: Lowry, L. (1989). *Number the stars*. New York, NY: Sandpiper.

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